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ABSTRACT

A model program for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students at risk of dropping out was established through the enhancement of existing programs and classes at Corpus Christi Independent School District. The model combined and coordinated components of vocational education, alternatives to social promotion, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instruction, and academic instruction. Activities included inservice workshops; establishment of a Support Room for teachers, administrators, and LEP students staffed by a teacher of vocational English as a Second Language; and additional support services for students. A handbook and a videotape for administrators and teachers on developing programs for LEP students in vocational education were developed. Students' general school performance, English proficiency, vocational skills, and attitudes were evaluated. Teachers rated the workshops and their own and students' attitudes. Data were obtained for 71 students who were administered the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills tests and California Achievement Test. Attendance figures showed a slight improvement. Eighty-two percent used the Support Room somewhat or frequently. Teacher ratings of workshops and presenters were higher later in the program, indicating a favorable program impact and more receptive attitudes. In a summative evaluation, teachers and administrators gave high ratings to model components and their implementation, the program's positive impact on students, and program success. (YLB)

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FINAL REPORT

Develop a Model Program for At-Risk Students Linking Vocational Education and Alternatives to Social Promotion for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students

Richard A. Bouton

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Sponsored Cooperatively by
Texas Education Agency

and

Extension Instruction and Materials Center
Division of Continuing Education
The University of Texas at Austin

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Develop a Model Program for At-Risk Students Linking Vocational Education and Alternatives to Social Promotion for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students

Problem Area Toward Which the Project Was Directed

This project was directed toward the dropout problem which currently exists across the country. Specifically, it was designed to address a population of students who are limited in their English skills and are, therefore, at high risk of dropping out of school. A need existed in the state of Texas to assist teachers, administrators, and counselors in their efforts to educate Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and to prepare them for the work world.

The development of a model program at Miller High School in Corpus Christi included a series of in-service workshops; the establishment of a Support Room for teachers, administrators, and LEP students; and a variety of additional support services for the students. Through these activities, the efforts of the teachers were strengthened and the attitudes and performances of the students were improved.

Goals and Objectives of the Project

The overall goal of this project was to establish a model program for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students through the enhancement of existing programs and existing classes at Corpus Christi Independent School District (CCISD). The model was created by combining and coordinating components of vocational education, alternatives to social promotion, English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, and academic instruction. The project goals for the LEP students included:

- longer retention in school;
- improved English speaking abilities;
- improved English writing abilities;
- improved academic skills;
- improved TEAMS scores; and
- increased employability.

The overall goal of the project was supported by the following specific objectives:

1. A model program was developed for use in the Corpus Christi Independent School District (CCISD) to serve at-risk students, linking vocational education and alternatives to social promotion.

2. In-service training was provided for vocational education teachers and academic teachers in the CCISD whose students were preparing for or were in vocational education.

3. A videotape and handbook was designed and developed which described the model program.

4. A plan for continuation of the model program within the CCISD was developed. The plan contains assurances that activities begun in the model program will continue within the district.

Description of the General Project Design and the Procedures Followed

To meet the objectives of the contract, a variety of activities were developed and provided for the program participants in Corpus Christi Independent School District (CCISD). An advisory committee was formed, and its members met during the second and third quarters of the contract period. During these meetings, the committee assisted in developing the model program and in planning the continuation of the model program.

A room at Miller High School in Corpus Christi was designated as the Support Room for LEP students enrolled in vocational education and for teachers of LEP students enrolled in or preparing to enroll in vocational education. A Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) teacher was hired by CCISD and placed in charge of the Support Room. She used a comprehensive list of references and resource materials, compiled and supplied by the Extension Instruction and Materials Center, to make selections for the Support Room; she added equipment and additional materials for students and for teachers and administrators. During the school year, the VESL teacher assisted LEP vocational students on an individual basis and on a small-group basis.

A total of 48 hours of in-service training was conducted in Corpus Christi for approximately 30 employees of Miller High School and CCISD. These employees included vocational teachers, academic teachers, ESL teachers, VESL teachers, counselors, and administrators. Topics for these workshops included the following:

- Teaching Methods for LEP Students
- Teaching Applied Basic Skills
- Improving TEAMS Scores in Language Arts
- Improving TEAMS Scores in Mathematics
- Increasing Coordination Between Teachers, Students, and Parents
- Using the Support Room
- Increasing Parental Involvement
- Student Assessment
- Counseling Services
- Increasing Community and Business Involvement
- Task Analysis and Materials Development
- LEP Teaching Tips

In addition to the above topics, emphasis was placed on other areas during the five in-service workshops. Cooperation among vocational and academic teachers and the coordination of their resources were stressed throughout the workshops. The development of parental and community involvement components continued at each workshop and were primarily created by the workshop participants, in order to meet the specific needs of their school, district, and community.

During the course of the model program's development, all activities were documented through text and/or film. Video footage was obtained at each of the five in-service workshops, in the Support Room, and on the grounds of Miller High School. This footage was used in the videotape that is described in the section, *Results and Accomplishments of the Project*, of this report. An extensive documentation of the project is included in the handbook, also described in that section.

Results and Accomplishments of the Project

In addition to the model program itself, two products were developed in conjunction with this project. These products document the project, and it is hoped that their dissemination will encourage and assist other schools and districts in developing programs similar to the model described. The products are:

- *Developing Programs for LEP Students in Vocational Education - A Handbook for Administrators and Teachers*. This handbook gives many of the specific details of the model program. The information is presented in a how-to format and includes additional tips and suggestions other than those used in the model program. This will allow other schools and districts to base a program on the components of the model program, while tailoring it to their specific, individual needs. Also included in the handbook is an extensive, annotated resource/reference bibliography for teachers and administrators. This bibliography lists materials designed for use with LEP and bilingual students and includes many materials designed for individual student use.

- *Developing Programs for LEP Students in Vocational Education - A Videotape for Administrators and Teachers*. The videotape highlights the three major components of the model program: the Support Room, the in-service workshops, and the additional support services for LEP students. Actual footage of the Support Room, the workshops, and LEP students at Miller High School add to the effectiveness of the film. It also includes teacher and student comments about the model program and about working with or being an LEP student. The videotape is designed as a motivating and informative tool for teachers and administrators to view during the planning and/or development stages of an LEP program.

Evaluation Procedures and Findings

Prior to development of the Corpus Christi Independent School District and The University of Texas at Austin model, a meeting was held to establish the goals for the model that was to be developed and the type of evaluation plan that was to be used. It was decided that the evaluation would use multiple measures and multiple methodologies. In the area of student performance, four basic goals were established and would be evaluated: general school performance, English proficiency, vocational skills, and attitudes. Teachers and administrators would also be involved as subjects in the evaluation. They would rate their attitudes and the attitudes of their students on summative questionnaires. Furthermore, their input would be obtained for formative evaluations on both informal, ongoing evaluations and on formal questionnaires.

Student Performance

Both *hard* data, such as standardized test scores, and *softer* data, such as teacher ratings, were to be obtained to measure student performance. However, measuring any significant progress in student performance *within* the span of one school year would be an unrealistic goal. This was especially true because many aspects of the program were not implemented until the second semester of the school year. For example, the VESL teacher was not hired until midway through the first semester, and the Support Room was not established and stocked with materials until early in the second semester. Furthermore, attributing any student gains *solely* to the model program would also be unrealistic. However, variables and methodologies for the evaluation were determined as if the progress were to be measured and attributed to the model. In this way, the foundation for a longer term, more meaningful evaluation was established.

For the goal of improvement in general school performance of students involved in the program, several variables were chosen to be examined. Those included absenteeism, dropout rate, grade point average (GPA), Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) scores, and the subjective opinions of the teachers involved in the program. Because little measurable difference would occur in the first three variables during the early stages of the model, the formative evaluation relied on the last variable. Two methods were chosen as a basis for measuring improvement. First, absences, dropout rate, and the GPA of students at Miller High School would be compared to district averages and those of students at Moody High School. Moody High School is a demographically similar school within CCISD. The second method chosen was to compare pre- and post-project data where it was possible to do so. For example, absences of students were compared for the 1987-88 and 1988-89 school years.

The TEAMS scores were treated as a competency score. Did these students achieve mastery on each of the portions of the TEAMS test? If LEP students could not understand what was being taught in class, they would not be able to master the skills necessary for TEAMS mastery. However, if they were mastering the skills, then learning was taking place and to some extent the program was working. It is important to note that because no control was established for these variables, the improvement could not be directly attributed to the program. As with every variable in the evaluation, the ideal situation would be to randomly assign students to either a control group or an experimental group and then make comparisons. However, for a variety of legal, practical, and moral reasons, this was not an acceptable method of conducting the project or the evaluation.

For the goal of improving English proficiency, three variables were determined to be indicative of improvement: GPA, California Achievement Test (CAT) scores, and the Test of English Proficiency (TEP) scores. With each, a student's pre- and post-project scores would be compared. Because the CAT and TEP are standardized and national percentage scores are reported, improvement in a student's national ranking (national percentage) could be compared for this year and last year. However, absolute scores on an achievement test could not be compared, because improvement in raw achievement scores would be expected regardless of involvement with a special program. Just being in school would cause an increase in achievement scores. Since all students increase in achievement by merely being in school, what is significant is the relative increase in ranking of students involved in the program. Again, on these little measurable improvement was expected during the first year.

For the goal of improving vocational skills, proficiency could be measured on competency profiles and mastery tests. What was important here was that learning had taken place. If LEP students could not understand what was being taught in class, they would not be able to master the vocational skills. However, if they were mastering the skills, then learning was taking place and the program was working. These variables were dealt with like the TEAMS variables, again with the caveat that mastery could not be attributed directly to the program.

The goal of improving student attitudes could be examined by the administration of an attitude questionnaire. The questionnaire would determine if the LEP students were aware of the program and its individual components, and if they felt good about being involved with it. If the students resented the program, in the long run the program might be doing more harm than good.

Workshop Evaluations

Teachers had the opportunity to evaluate each major presenter at each of the in-service workshops. Furthermore, all of the individual evaluations were made on identical rating forms, so that each presenter could be compared on several factors. The factors included the quality, the relevance, and the usefulness of the presentation. Besides having closed-ended rating of 21 factors concerning the presentation, the form included several open-ended questions for suggestions and comments. All ratings were made anonymously. After the second program, a communication sheet between teachers and project staff was established. Teachers were required to make suggestions or comments on a dialog sheet, and staff members were required to read and respond to them. Again the dialog could be anonymous if a teacher wished. The dialog sheets proved to be very helpful to staff members in fine-tuning the project and very helpful in improving teacher attitudes.

The key to the formative administrator evaluations was also communication. Here, the evaluation plan was to provide ample communication opportunities for CCISD administrators and EIMC staff members. Whenever communications broke down, clear channels of communication were defined and followed. In this way, all key personnel in the program were included in the communication loop. This is important for any successful program and especially vital when some participants are in separate buildings within the district and others are located outside the district and city. By encouraging communications during the development of the program, hundreds of mini-formative evaluations took place and the program was adjusted when necessary.

Summative Evaluation

Finally, teachers, administrators, and project staff members completed a summative evaluation form. This form gave everyone involved in the program an opportunity to evaluate each of the major components of the program. Notice that the evaluation includes and separates the concept of the component from its implementation. Too many evaluation forms do not separate these. Thus, when a component is down-rated, it is not clear whether the concept or implementation was at fault. This evaluation also provided a springboard for adjusting the program as it continued into its second year. The results of this evaluation form will also serve as a baseline for future evaluations, so that improvements in the program can be measured.

Findings

Given the evaluation plan outlined above, the following data and findings were able to be obtained during the short duration of the model.

Seventy-one students were clearly identified as being both LEP students and current enrollees in vocational education programs. Although the high school in which the model program was developed has many other LEP students, they were not included in this sample because they were not eligible for participation in the program. Also, only students who were clearly identified as being level 1, 2, or 3 LEP students were included in this data set. Perhaps as many as 100 students participated in the program or were directly affected by it. However, they were not included in the data, because of the limitations for inclusion in the data set. Of the included students 26% were freshmen, 30% were sophomores, 11% were juniors, and 33% were seniors.

Student data was obtained on the most recent TEAMS score as a measure of the current standing of this group of students. As noted above, this data would serve as a baseline for

measuring the progress of these students and future participants. Seventy-six percent of those students for whom data could be obtained failed at least one section of their last TEAMS test or were given a one-time exemption from taking it because of their limited English abilities. Only 15 students (21%) had passed both sections of their most recent TEAMS test. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the number of LEP vocational students passing their last TEAMS test, by academic topic. Clearly, this is a deficient group academically because of their limited English abilities.

Table 1
Number of LEP vocational students passing their most recent TEAMS test.

Status	Language Arts	Mathematics
Exempt from taking	27	28
Failed	14	14
Passed	22	20
Data not available	8	9
TOTAL	71	71

Standardized achievement test scores were obtained for each of the students for whom recent data was available. The test used by the Corpus Christi ISD was the California Achievement Test (CAT). For each student, a national percentile ranking is reported in reading, mathematics, and language arts. Because the test is given annually, both this year's and last year's scores were obtained. Table 2 summarizes the CAT scores for this group of students. Again, it can readily be seen that this group of students is deficient academically. In language arts these students are at or below the twentieth percentile nationally, in reading they are at or below the fifteenth percentile, and in mathematics they are at or below the twenty-sixth percentile. It should be noted that in both reading and language arts students improved from last year to this year, when compared to national norms. However, these improvements are not statistically significant and are probably more attributable to staying in school for another year and improving their English skills during that time. Furthermore, it is important to note that this year's CAT test was given in approximately the middle of the school year, shortly after implementation of the model began. Thus, very little of these gains could be directly attributed to this program. However, this data can be used as a baseline in future years to better analyze the program.

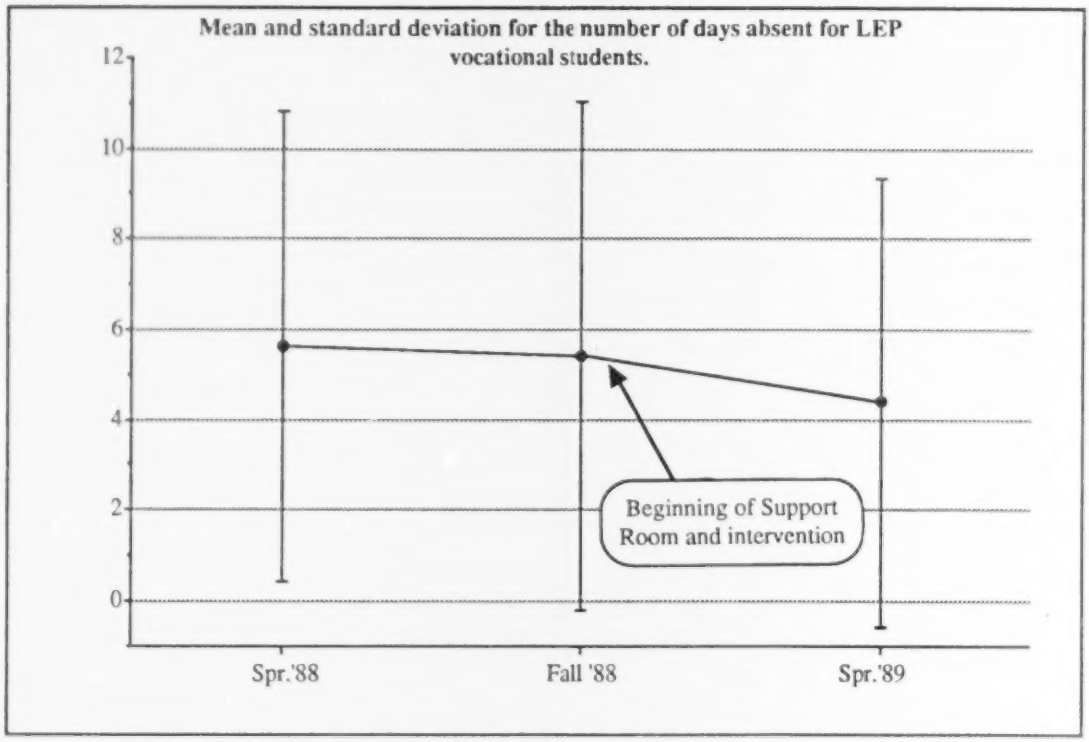
Table 2
CAT scores summary for LEP students in vocational programs.

Area	Year	Mean	Std.Dev.	Number
Reading	last year	13.2	12.8	60
	this year	15.0	11.6	47
Mathematics	last year	25.8	22.4	60
	this year	25.6	21.0	44
Language Arts	last year	18.8	14.0	61
	this year	20.8	13.2	47

One of the areas on which the program might have an immediate impact would be attendance and dropout rates, although the impact would be expected to be small during this

short time frame. So, attendance and dropout data were obtained for each of the participating students. Of the 71 students, four dropped out of school during the first semester before the intervention began. Two others transferred to other schools. During the spring semester, two students dropped out of school. Attendance figures were obtained for three semesters — Spring 1988, Fall 1989, and Spring 1989. Figure 1 indicates a slight improvement in the mean attendance over that period. Although that improvement is not statistically significant, the downward slope of the improvement increases at the time of intervention. This is the most encouraging data which suggests an immediate impact on the students.

Figure 1.



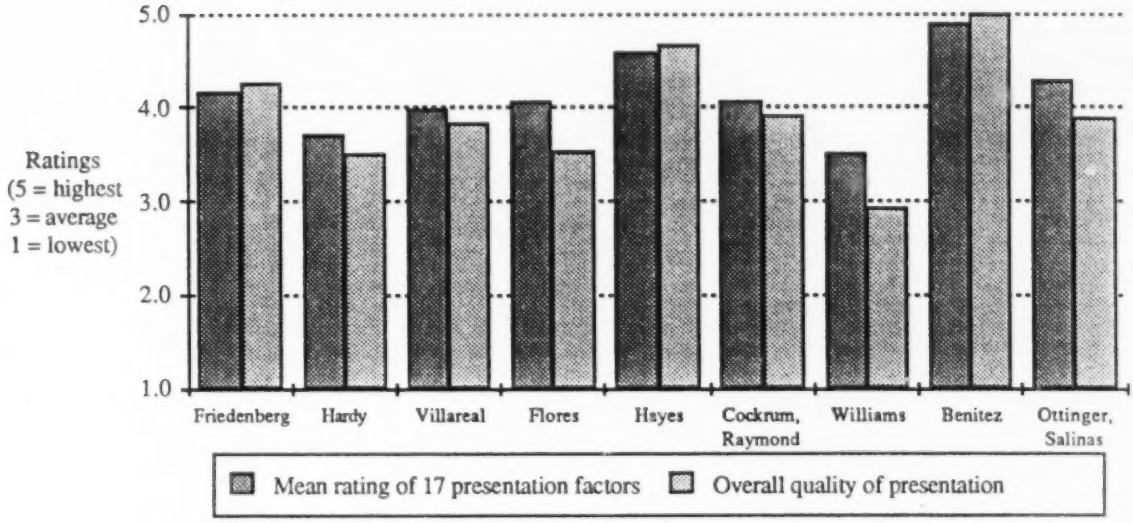
Data was also collected on how much each of the LEP students in vocational programs used the Support Room. Students were divided into three groups: 18% used the Support Room infrequently, 52% used it somewhat, and 30% used it frequently. The other student data — grade level, absenteeism, current CAT scores, etc. — were correlated, using both Pearson and X^2 techniques, with the frequency of Support Room use variable. However, no significant relationships were found. Again, this was expected because of the brevity of actual intervention at this time and because of the indirect nature of much of the intervention.

Intervention with the teachers, in the form of in-service workshops, began earlier and was direct. From the first workshop to the last, teachers were given multiple opportunities to provide evaluative feedback to the project staff. First, each of the major presenters was

rated on 17 separate qualities. (A copy of the rating form can be found in the handbook developed in this project.) The presentation as a whole was also rated for its overall quality and effectiveness. Each of the presenters was favorably received. A summary of the ratings of the nine major presenters is shown in Figure 2. It is interesting to note that, as the workshops continued, the program began to have a visible and favorable impact on the teachers. Their mood was more receptive, and they tended to rate later presenters and workshops higher than earlier ones.

Figure 2.

Summary Ratings of Key In-Service Presenters



In order to obtain summative evaluation data, at the end of the project each teacher and administrator who participated in the program was asked to complete a two-page questionnaire. (A copy of the questionnaire can be found in the handbook developed in this project.) The anonymous questionnaire was divided into four major sections: background information, the importance of each program component, the quality of implementation of each program component, and the successfulness of the program and its major components. Ratings were on a five-point scale with five being the most important, highest quality, or most successful and one being the least or lowest. All of the program components were judged to be important. Two of the components, the Support Room and the VESL teacher, were rated 5.0 in importance by each of the 20 respondents, and each of the other components was rated 4.2 or higher. Clearly, the teachers felt that the components of the model were important in helping this type of student. These high importance ratings may also reflect the positive attitude that was instilled in the teachers and administrators by the end of the project. Generally, the raters felt that most of the components were not only important but also well implemented. The highest implementation ratings were for the three major components of the program — the Support Room, the VESL teacher, and the in-service training. The lowest implementation ratings were for the components that were the last to be implemented or were scheduled for implementation during the 1989-1990 school year. No components were rated below average. Table 3 shows both the importance and implementation ratings for each component.

Table 3
Importance and implementation ratings for each component of the model program.

Program Component	*Importance*	*Implementation*
VESL teacher	5.00	4.94
Support Room	5.00	4.89
Letters to parents	4.89	4.56
LEP training (vocational teachers)	4.89	4.71
Parental involvement	4.84	3.71
Student materials	4.83	4.83
Coordination assistance	4.79	4.28
LEP training (academic teachers)	4.78	4.61
Job-getting training	4.76	3.94
Teacher materials	4.72	4.56
Parent-VESL teacher conferences	4.72	3.89
Extra counseling	4.67	3.78
Extra parent-teacher conferences	4.67	3.72
Media involvement	4.63	4.22
Home visits	4.63	3.28
Open house for parents	4.61	4.50
Peer tutoring	4.61	3.72
Community involvement	4.58	3.94
LEP training (administrators)	4.56	3.89
Role-model speakers	4.53	3.22
Community involvement	4.47	3.78
Research materials	4.44	4.50
Administrator materials	4.28	3.83
Teacher incentives	4.21	4.39

The global ratings of the program's success and impact on the LEP students in vocational programs were also favorable. The overall program had a mean rating of 4.56 (successful-very successful) on the five-point Likert scale. The workshops taken collectively were given a mean rating of 4.22 (successful-very successful). Each of the original project goals, which were each framed in the program's positive impact on students, was also rated. Those ratings ranged from 3.89 to 4.22 (successful and successful-very successful, respectively). Finally, the respondents were asked to rate how successful the program was in helping them to help their students. The rating was 4.31 (successful-very successful). Table 4 summarizes each of the success ratings.

Table 4
How successful was the model program?

Item	Mean rating
General items	
The overall program	4.56
The in-service workshops	4.22
Helping you help students	4.31
Program goals relating to students	
Helping improve English abilities	4.22
Helping improve academic abilities	4.22
Helping improve self-esteem	4.22
Helping prevent dropouts	4.06
Helping increase TEAMS scores	4.00
Helping improve employability	3.94
Helping reduce absenteeism	3.89

One final evaluation of the overall program was made. Near the end of the school year, two representatives of CCISD were sent to visit two similar programs in the New York City area, which had received national publicity. Their goals were to get additional ideas for this model and to informally compare our program to those. In their report, they stated that they felt that this model was as good or better than those established programs.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations for the Future

Clearly, the model program was successful in the short term and will probably continue to be as successful or more successful as it matures. Furthermore, the direct impact on students should be much more observable and measurable after continued long-term intervention.

The program has already affected Miller High School positively. In the 1989-90 school year, when the model is implemented at another CCISD high school, the program will probably affect that school positively as well.

The participating teachers demonstrated a visible improvement in attitude, which probably improved their classroom performance. Furthermore, the teachers learned through the in-service workshops both how to better teach LEP students and how to better coordinate their efforts with teachers from other disciplines. The teachers now have material resources available to them through the Support Room, which can be used to implement many of the things they learned. Besides having teachers who are better prepared to meet their needs, students now have additional resources as well. They have a Support Room filled with materials and equipment designed for their special needs. They have a VESL teacher who can further assist them until they can perform satisfactorily in school, and they now have counselors and administrative personnel who are more attuned to their needs. They also have additional parent, peer, and community support. Although no statistically significant improvement was demonstrated for this group of LEP students, none was expected because of the relatively short period in which the model was in place. From observational data, it was clear that the program was beginning to have an effect on these students. And the indications were that the impact would continue and increase over time.

This model is workable, produced positive results, and can be readily implemented in many other districts with sufficient numbers of LEP students. The implications of a program which can effectively improve the probability of success for LEP students in school, and thereby reduce the probability of their dropping out, are critical to goals of the educational system in Texas.